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ABSTRACT

A case study in a rural Australian township attempted to determine indicators verifying the existence of social capital. Social capital is provisionally defined as the networks, norms, and trust that constitute the capacity of individuals, workplaces, groups, organizations, and communities to strive for sustainable futures in a changing socioeconomic environment. Participants in the study were chosen based on recommendations of community members on who provides them with help, advice, or information. Analysis of interviews, tape-recorded community meetings and interactions, and personal diaries identified three categories of resources that people draw on as they interact with each other: 1) knowledge resources, or the shared knowledge of community, personal, individual, and collective information; 2) identity resources, or the shared understandings of personal, individual, and collective identities; and 3) consolidated resources, the common understanding and familiarity with community assets used reciprocally for mutual benefit. A set of indicators of these resources used in "community interactive productivity" was then developed. Interactive productivity is viewed as the community learning processes by which social capital is created. The terms "community learning" and "capacity building," and the possible causal link between social capital and economic well-being are discussed. (Contains 56 references.) (TD)

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INDICATORS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL: SOCIAL CAPITAL AS THE PRODUCT OF LOCAL INTERACTIVE LEARNING PROCESSES

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Abstract

Social capital is provisionally defined as the networks, norms and trust which constitute the resources required for individuals, workplaces, groups, organisations and communities to strive for sustainable futures in a changing socio-economic environment. "Indicators of Social Capital" is an Australian pilot study whose purpose is to derive tentative indicators of social capital through a grounded theory approach, which in turn allows for subsequent refinement and testing. The study consists of an intensively analysed whole-community case study. The assumptions and issues considered in the project's development are explained, and the matter of definition, literature and possible uses of social capital are also discussed. The complex conceptual, definitional and methodological matters for the project are operationalised through the research question which is: "What is the nature of the interactive productivity between the local networks in a community?" Through answering this question, the research begins to address an area for inquiry which is both under-researched and in which there is a great deal of uncertainty.

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The need for the research

Social capital is provisionally accepted in this paper as the networks, norms and trust (e.g., Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993) which constitute the resources (capacity) required for individuals, workplaces, groups, organisations and communities to strive for sustainable futures in a changing socio-economic environment. Policy makers, strategists, educationalists, researchers and practitioners of all kinds agree on the importance of striving for a civil society (e.g., Cox, 1995, Offé, 1998) - one in which there is commitment to public life, as well as the family and work. Governments world-wide are under increasing pressure from all quarters - economic, social and political - to help build a society where people feel a sense of well-being, and where associated indicators of health, employment, education, training and civic participation (among others) are achieved. Social capital, built through learning processes, assists in achieving a civil society by developing networks, shared values, trust and commitment.

The research reported here is concerned with the role of learning and social capital in responding to change and in sustaining community viability and so promoting national social cohesion and well-being. The study's need is justified through recognising that the body of research and informed writing on social capital is small. In fact the study does not assume the 'reality' of such a thing as social capital, even though it considers the literature related to it. The definition of social capital is accepted provisionally in the first paragraph of the paper. This meaning will be tested through the outcomes of the research.

Indicators of Social Capital is an Australian pilot study whose purpose is to derive tentative indicators of (what may be called) social capital through a grounded theory approach for subsequent refinement and testing. The study consists of an intensively analysed whole-community case study. The assumptions and issues considered in the project's development are set out in a later section, and the matter of definition of social capital is discussed in the second and fourth issues in that section. To guide the reader, however, it is important to state here that the complex conceptual, definitional and methodological matters were operationalised through the research question for the project which is, *What is the nature of the interactive productivity between the local networks in a community?* Through answering this question, the research begins to address an area for inquiry which is under-researched and in which there is a great deal of uncertainty.

Research about social capital has so far tended to consist of testing results and conceptual issues related to networks, norms and trust (e.g., Cox, 1995; Falk, 1997a; Fountain, 1997; Harrison & Falk, 1998; Kilpatrick, Bell & Falk, 1998; Latham, 1998; Norton et al., 1997; Onyx & Bullen, 1997) established by seminal researchers in the field, namely Coleman (1988) and Putnam (1993). Academics from fields such as economics, social sciences, management and others, as well as bureaucrats, politicians and policy-makers across the Western world - the leaders of the UK, USA and Australia, at least - are

presently and increasingly interested in studying the nature of social capital and how it can be used in their various fields of concern.

There is uncertainty in matters related to social capital which resolves itself around two key questions, each of which has been identified as a result of the existing research already conducted and in progress at the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia (Falk, 1997a, b, c, d, & forthcoming; Harrison & Falk, 1998; Kilpatrick, Bell & Falk, 1998). The first question needing clarification is: *What is the nature of social capital across the different interest and academic sectors?* The second question asks: *How do you build social capital?* It has become clear that those who intuitively see potential for using social capital in their various sectors also appreciate the uncertainty surrounding the nature and meanings of social capital. These same people are also primarily concerned with its possible, and still uncertain, social and economic uses in their areas of concern.

The research reported on in this paper should enable a judgement to be made as to whether the indicators developed can justifiably be viewed as social capital - the outcome of the quality and quantity of the learning processes (interactive productivity) between individuals and groups in the community. Preliminary syntheses of the empirical, research commentary and discipline based, policy-based, community development practice, economic and management literature showed consistent but implicit trends and themes, which were analysed to inform the conceptual basis of the study and its methodology. This analysis confirmed the possibility of two dimensions to learning as the *process* of interaction between people and groups which builds or accumulates social capital as the *outcome*.

Links between learning, social capital and socio-economic reform

It is argued that learning forms social capital which makes social and economic reform productive and sustainable. Saul (1995) asks why it *seems* common these days to assume that 'economics' has all the answers to society's problems. He answers as follows:

> The answer usually given is that economic activity determines the success or failure of a society....But economic activity is less a cause than an effect - of geographical and climatic necessity, family and wider social structures, the balance between freedom and order, the ability of society to unleash the imagination, and the weakness or strength of neighbours. (Saul, 1995, p. 115)

The literature assumes that the contemporary knowledge-based economy depends on active and effective learning processes producing stores of social capital. The World Bank Policy and Research Bulletin (1997) summarises learning as "the acquisition of knowledge and information [which] is critical to economic growth" (p. 2). Learning is the mechanism which facilitates development and change of individuals, work, organisations and institutions in response to the need for interaction between economic policies and their social

and political context (ibid. p. 2). Thus, learning, as the assumed mechanism for building social capital, is and will be increasingly an important determinant of economic growth (ibid. p. 3). These links between learning, change and the productivity resulting from the learning interactions, are examined in the course of this report on the research.

Given that the links suggested in the literature are found to be confirmed, there are four areas in which this project's focus on building social capital through learning may lead to direct and significant benefits for national well-being.

1 Social benefit

Policy-makers, government strategists, economists and sociologists continue to find deficiencies with the traditional economic forecasts for society and undesirable consequences for the public good (e.g., Latham, 1998; Norton et al., 1997; Saul, 1997). Interest in learning and how it is enhanced by the mechanisms of effective interpersonal interaction (e.g., Coleman, 1988; Cox, 1995; Latham, 1998; Norton et al., 1997; Putnam, 1993), have attracted national and international interest at the highest levels. Professor Robert Putnam from Harvard University meets with President Bill Clinton regularly to discuss ways in which social capital and democracy can work together to produce a civil society - arguably a parallel term for a learning society (Young, 1995) - one in which there are high levels of individual and collective resources, responsiveness and interaction in achieving economic and social well-being. In Australia, the Australian Research Council has supported a review of current literature on social capital in recognition of the significance of this important emerging field of study.

While the literature has identified the achievement of a civil society as ultimately desirable, economists and social commentators and researchers have recognised that the present economic debates around market-State balance is not achieving such a civil society. Suddenly, along with the rhetoric around "lifelong learning", it seems there is a convergence of views that learning provides the most significant avenue for answers to the question of how to achieve a civil society. Recognition of the importance of learning's contribution to socio-economic outcomes, and research about it, is now evident from a wide range of sectors (e.g., Argyris & Schon, 1978; Falk, 1997a, b, c, d & forthcoming; Falk & Bowles, forthcoming; Harrison & Falk, 1998; Kilpatrick, 1996 & 1997a & b; Kilpatrick et al., 1998; Offé 1985 & 1998; Senge, 1990; Teachman, Paasch & Carver, 1997; Wang & Thomas, 1998; Watkins & Marsick, 1996).

Learning processes, enhanced by the mechanisms of social capital, produce change in work, community and public practices through changes to people's skills, knowledge and values. These changes, the outcomes of learning, are visible at several levels of society: Learning produces demonstrable changes in individuals' knowledge, skills and values; learning produces changes to outcomes achievable by groups and teams; learning produces demonstrable changes at the work (Owen, 1995), community and regional level, and subsequently at the societal level. Work by eminent scholars such as Michael

Young on "learning societies" (e.g., 1995) conceives of learning societies as resulting from the collected outcomes of individual and collective learning, and are well educated, responsive to change, reflective and healthy.

2 Economic benefit

The premise argued above is that economics is necessary but not sufficient for societal well-being. Yet the achievement of economic targets such as employment is of paramount importance to the well-being of any nation. So the project uses learning to mean the mechanisms by which economic outcomes might be achieved more quickly, more efficiently, and in more sustainable ways (Kilpatrick 1997a & b). Research such as Coleman's (1988) and Putnam's (1993) has implications for the effects of learning and social capital on economic indicators. It suggests that economic well-being is the result of a social production process which involves learning and its resulting social capital. The body of research emerging from the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia lends weight to these assertions (e.g., Falk, 1997a, b, c & d; Harrison & Falk, 1998; Kilpatrick, Bell & Falk, 1998; Kilpatrick, Falk & Morgan, 1998) and that of historical and social commentators internationally (e.g., Saul, 1997). The actual relationship between producing good economic benefits and the learning processes which achieve them (Falk, 1994 & 1997c) is one of central concern for the project.

3 Technological benefit

Workers are required to interact in new ways with technology and to work in a diverse range of work structures. Telecommuting, working in teams, working in several part-time jobs and working in a series of short- or medium-term contract positions all bring new issues about learning to the world of work. New technology makes new ways of training delivery possible, while changes in the way we work demand changes in the way we learn, be it through formal training or informally on the job. We lack an adequate understanding of the issues which the changing nature of work and the opportunities of new technologies raise for vocational education and training. Research already being conducted shows that technology holds some benefits for a learning, civil society, but needs to be tempered with consideration for the ways people learn, and their social, cultural and economic contexts (e.g., Kilpatrick, 1996 & 1997; Kilpatrick et al., 1998; Owen et al., 1998). The role of computer networks and the social capital potentially created through new forms of electronic networking and communication raise questions for research into learning and technology. The most significant question is whether social capital can be built and maintained in electronic communication or whether traditional face-to-face learning interactions alone produce social capital outcomes. Answers to the study's question about the nature of interactive productivity between networks will help determine the specific nature of future research into technology and social capital formation.

4 Cultural benefit

Learning not only makes socio-economic reform productive, but also facilitates cultural benefits for a nation such as Australia. Research into learning and its associated mechanisms of social capital show that social and

cultural diversity is a key indicator of a productive and learning society (e.g., Flora et al., 1996; Cox, 1995; Falk & Penson, 1996; Harrison & Falk, 1998; Putnam, 1993). The notion of the production of cultural benefit through the study of social learning, based in the principles of social ecology (e.g., Bookchin, 1990; Woog & Dimitrov 1994) is therefore locked into the study in its explicit recognition of the role of valuing and incorporating culturally diverse considerations in its methodology, outlined later in this paper.

Assumptions & issues

Assumptions

The **primary assumption** for the study is that interactions (which the project classifies as learning interactions) have the potential to result in the accumulation (or building) of stores of social capital. Further, the learning interactions could be 'good' or 'bad', and they could result in different kinds of social capital. So the assumption is that the interactive productivity is the *process* which results in the accumulation of social capital as the *outcome* of the processes. However, it is argued that stores of social capital resources may be detected only when they are *used*. the derivation of indicators of social capital will therefore need to be indicators which express actions.

A **second** and related assumption is that learning is an interactive group of processes which is closely related to, or indeed facilitates, change in the circumstances of the learners and can lead to economic and social change. Within this second assumption are two further related assumptions, as discussed in Falk (1997c, p. 55). One assumption, which links the question to the methodology, is that the point at which meanings for "learning" can best be observed and demonstrated is at the moments where interaction occurs between participants in identified learning interactions. The second related assumption is that meanings for learning will have two dimensions: (a) a process dimension - a chronologically defined set of social practices, or learning moment, or learning event, which provide the social framework within which learning might occur - and (b) a contextual dimension, where sense can only be made of the "learning moment" by reference to the broad, socio-cultural and political frame of reference. Learning only ever occurs in a particular socio-cultural context. That context will have various features, including the societal and institutional values which prevail at any one time. In deriving indicators, it is an embedded task of the project to examine the relationship between locally produced learning interactions and the possible social outcomes of those interactions.

Five issues

Having decided on the whole community as the unit of analysis, an important stage in the development of the methodology occurred when the researchers had to decide what the actual data was that would be counted as the unit of observation for 'learning' in the study. The consideration was to ensure that,

whatever was taken to count for 'learning' was also consistent (according to existing empirical and conceptual work) with the broader social view of learning's close relationship both with change and the formation of social capital. Finally, the decision was taken that the unit of observation was to be the interactions between people, a decision based on five issues which will be briefly outlined now.

The **first issue** was to ensure that there was a coherent link between the conceptualisation of the research and its terms and perceived outcomes to what would be counted as data for the project. Conversation analysis informed by ethnomethodology provides an analytic link between the conceptual domains encompassed in this study, since it is seeking to disclose or recover embedded cultural phenomena in the language-in-use. That is, how the members of the community daily and interactively encounter the wider culture. It is argued that knowledge, values and society's moral order are themselves aspects of the culture used as resources in interactive moments, and are enmeshed in conversation yet recoverable through the analysis of the social practices of conversational structures. Hence the link between instances of interaction (as data) and the possible outcomes, of which social capital is supposed to be one. The linking of knowledge and values as co-constructed conversational outcomes is outlined by Jayyusi (1991):

> The practices, in which our category concepts are embedded and used, and the knowledge contexts bound up with them, are ones in which description and appraisal, the conceptual, moral, and practical are reflexively and irremediably bound up with, and embedded in, each other. Intelligibility is constituted in practico-moral terms. (p. 241)

The notion of the inseparability and embeddedness of knowledge and values in mundane conversational practices is used in this study in methodological and analytic respects: in the way the research clearly relates the broader sociological concerns of the study to the interrogation of the data, then to the coherence of the findings and implications which may be made about the wider social order.

The **second issue** was for the research not to assume the nature or meanings of "learning" and "social capital" in the research design. Rather, the study conceives of both learning and social capital as, respectively, interactions and the outcomes of those interactions. This allows for an analysis of the *nature* of the interactive (learning) processes, and the *nature* of their outcomes as being something which could be justifiably called social capital. The stated research question allows for a clarification of the relationship (perhaps causal) between learning, social capital and the economic outcomes to which social capital is surmised to contribute.

A **third issue** lies in the way the research assumes the nature of 'organisations' and 'institutions' as being reflexively constructed - an issue of significance from a sociological perspective. The research builds in institutional effects on individuals and vice versa through its use of ethnomethodological underpinnings and approach to data and its analysis. As Boden (1994) says:

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> The retrospective illusion of social structure, reflexively understood and realized in immediate action, is not some monolithic backdrop against which tiny human actions are played out, but a highly dynamic, at times even dramatic, social tapestry whose details are picked out and elaborated by succeeding generations of human actors. As people talk organizations into being, they simultaneously pick out the particular strands of abstract order that can relevantly instantiate the moment. In so doing, they significantly support, shape and occasionally subvert the organization, which will then move forward into the next moments through other actions with other actors. (p. 202)

A **fourth issue** lies in the assumed nature of social capital itself, along with some related thoughts. One of the characteristics of social capital (as a form of capital) lies in its capacity to be stored and drawn on. It can, therefore, be depleted. The matter of accumulation and stores lends itself to defining social capital in terms of resources of various kinds. Ethnomethodology provides a compatible theoretical and practical link from the local interaction to the question of 'resources' through its devices of Standardised Relational Pairs, Membership Categories and the Membership Categorisation Devices (MCD). In simplified terms, the sense that social actors make of the world and the way they construct and reconstruct it relies on resources drawn on in the course of the everyday, mundane interactions (e.g., Heritage, 1984). In ethnomethodological terms, it is through these interactions, which participants make sense of through drawing on mutually understood categories of (intellectual, epistemological, ethical and social) resources, that social life and structures are constructed and re-produced. The resulting possible reconciliation of the nature and roles of institutions and organisations supports the need for a re-framed theory of action following Boden (1994, pp. 203-208), a matter to be followed up in subsequent papers.

Interesting analogous questions arise, then, as to whether one can have an overdraft of social capital. Thinking of a banking parallel, for example, would the concept of 'going into the red' on one's social capital account be likened to social capital opposite characteristics such as 'mistrust' (no trust), 'isolationism' (no networks), rugged individualism and criminality (no norms)? Or is an overdraft in a social capital account where one borrows stores of networks, norms and trust in order to re-establish one's own stores? And what might it mean to 'borrow' stores of social capital?

The **fifth issue** is that the researchers were conscious of the need to link in a coherent way the data (interactions) and the broader social consequences of that interaction. This coherence was approached through the use of ethnomethodological principles and the resulting conversation analysis based on those principles. In the development of so-called indicators, as the observable signs of surmised social structures, the researchers viewed it as important to retain the links between data and outcomes in the development process and expression of the actual indicators themselves. It is our experience that "indicators" can take the form of a variety of expressions and levels of activity. For example, Cox (1997) lists a health indicator as "family and close friendships". The OECD (1976) used measures expressed as numbers for indicators: for example, a health indicator is "Life expectancy at age 1, 20, 40, 60" (p. 36).

In our view, these are not the most appropriate forms of expression for indicators developed as grounded theory, but are dimensions and measures respectively. The linguistic expression of a process indicator has to be at the level of detail which specifies an action. The action indicates the presence of a resource that the participants draw on to make sense of their interactions; in other words, an indicator has to *indicate* something else - the economic, social, geographic, collective and personal resources used in the interactions. And that 'something else' - the meaning-making resources - are taken to be the next level of heading under which a group of indicators could be described. So the indicators themselves in many ways *are* data, and they indicate spheres of social activity which can be grouped together thematically. These thematic areas can then be globally grouped under broad and thematically consistent categories of meaning-making resources, and it is these categories that connect the individual items of data to the broad social consequences of those interactions.

This section has outlined some of the assumptions and issues of the research. It is important to state here that this paper is one reporting of the research: that relating to the development of indicators. Other cuts at the data using conversation analysis and other techniques have already been published (e.g., Falk, forthcoming; Harrison & Falk, 1998) and will continue to be published. The next section will set out the methods and procedure for the derivation of the indicators of social capital.

Methodology

The purpose of the research is to answer the research question, *What is the nature of the interactive productivity between the local networks in a community?*. To do so, it derives indicators for what might be called "social capital". The indicators stand as the indications or reflections of the presence of what might be labelled social capital - that is, the indicators are viewed as the reflections of social capital being used. The research is therefore theory-building using the principles of grounded theory as in Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985 & Strauss & Corbin, 1990) rather than theory-testing. Some methods and data assumptions and issues were discussed in the section above. Others follow now.

The methodology decided on as the most appropriate way of achieving the above outcomes is best described as a whole-community case study using ethnographic techniques. Data were collected from a number of participants and from four main sources reported on later in this paper. The data were analysed using (a) detailed conversation analyses drawing on ethnomethodological principles and procedures (e.g., Heritage, 1984; Boden, 1994), (b) manual thematic techniques for content analysis (e.g., Patton, 1990; Wolcott, 1994) with recourse to synthesised theoretical and empirical literature indicated in this paper's earlier sections, as well as (c) the NUD*IST software package to identify frequency of mentions and related themes and trends, (d) linguistic principles (Halliday, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.

153) and (e) indicator development consistent with good principles of grounded theory development, and the principles of conceptual development, dimensions, indicators described by Babbie (1998, pp. 118-124).

While a mix of analytic techniques (a, b, c, d and e above) is used in the whole community case study, the development of the indicators component of the larger study, reported on in this paper, draws only on (b), (c), (d) and (e) above. It was a requirement of the research that the indicators had to be derived from the data, and that they had to be expressed in such a way as to be consistent with the ethnomethodological base of the research, namely, they had to linguistically and socially specify actions which indicated groups of resources upon which the participants drew as their conversational interactions proceeded on a moment-by-moment basis. The freshly established indicators of (what might be presumed to be) social capital were then refined, collated and arranged using grammatical, linguistic grouping and sequencing.

Background to the "Rivertown" community

The whole community which formed the basis of the case study is here called Rivertown, a township typical of many in modern day rural Australia: it is small - its population is around 2,500 with a further 2,500 in the surrounding district. It has high unemployment, particularly high youth unemployment, it is suffering resource shrinkage as banks and government outlets close regional facilities, it has had its share of trouble in obtaining medical practitioners and allied health services from time to time, and it has had until recently a long history of divisive and bitter community conflict arising from the differences between the newly arrived "hippies" and the long-time traditional residents.

On the other hand, Rivertown differs dramatically from other communities with similar characteristics. The township, as the focus of the surrounding community, is set in a picturesque river valley, and is described as an historical village. The township itself is attractive. It is clear that the town is cared for in the physical sense. There are many community activities and events, some of which attract national attention and patronage, and the local clubs and associations meet frequently and actively. The community is vibrant - art and craft have become a community impetus. It is also recent winner of a prestigious national community award, various tourism and numerous Tidy Town awards.

Community members describe their community's success as resulting from "pride" (Editor, 1997: 8), "spirit", "teamwork", "working together", "friendly", "support for each other", "everybody pulls together", "co-operation between everyone", "all walks of life working together", "people band together...on a project", "grassroots community action" (Voss, 1997, p. 7), and:

> What has been our strength is we've brought different lifestyles, different ideas and different views together and moulded them into this community outlook. (Voss, 1997, p. 7)

It can be surmised that Rivertown has been engaged in constant learning and the resulting accumulation of social capital. Its members seem to have learned that there are benefits from working together in differently-coupled networks for common purposes, and it has demonstrated that it has learned to share implicitly or explicitly certain values - the foundation of social norms, and to trust one another in certain circumstances in order to achieve common purposes.

It was noted earlier that it is an assumption to be tested that social capital is the group of resources accumulated through interactions viewed as learning processes. Necessarily, the project looks at learning processes and learning outcomes as contributing to that accumulation; at the individuals learning and the results of that learning. It also looks at the way the various individuals, groups, clubs and associations work and learn together (e.g., small business with schools and community groups and government, the Bowls Club with the Hospital Auxiliary with the Rotary Club with the craft club with the church group). In short, we are looking at what might be called a "learning community" (e.g., Brooks & Moore, 1997; Falk, 1997a, b, c, d & forthcoming; Falk & Bowles, forthcoming; Harrison & Falk, 1998; Kilpatrick, 1996 & 1997a & b; Kilpatrick et al., 1998).

Defining the boundaries of the community

In the initial stages of this project it was judged important to select a sample from the community that represented the key diverse segments of the community.

The next stage was to locate a demographic representation within the geographic community. To ensure a reliable community cross-representation it was important to include other than obvious local leadership indicators commonly known as the "movers and shakers" and to locate the "quiet achiever". Our concern for canvassing a community-elected sample hinged on the notion of who the community saw as their leaders, a concern expressed by Langone and Rohs (1995):

> in the community environment, leadership is often a function of concerned citizens rather than action by positional leaders. The notion of egalitarian or "reciprocal" leadership...is critical in communities because one person does not control a group. Leadership is shared by many individuals at various time depending on the situation and the required leadership skills (p. 253).

How the sample was selected

This study gained its sample through the snowball technique overlaid with socio-demographic variables. Snowball sampling is commonly used in qualitative field research (Rubin and Babbie, 1993). Emery and Purser (1996) refer to this process as the "community reference system". We drew up a social network map of the community from the local Services Directory. The network map typically covers such variables as key interest groups, demographics, small business, social services, schools, government offices, religious groups and so on. The selection process was implemented by telephoning the first contact of the target population and asking for a further

three names of people they respected. In this case the criteria for selection hinged on the questions "to whom do you usually go for information" and "who do you consider approachable"? These nominated people were contacted by telephone and asked the same two questions. Often members of the community are nominated several times by different groups.

People nominated more than three times were set aside as the community elected sample and were subsequently approached to participate in the semi-structured interview, tape recording and diary collection. The community members most identified as proponents of interacting with different group affiliations and interests were then collated as a socio matrix to reveal the networks in which they are involved, and the community interactivity in which they participate (Judd, Smith & Kidder, 1991).

Recording the interactivity

The communicative interactivity was recorded using three methods: an interview, tape recording spontaneous snippets of conversation and reflective journal entries. After an initial semi-structured interview, selected participants were asked to carry a portable tape recorder with them for the duration of a day. They activated their tape recorders when they engaged in a communicative interaction. In addition, participants kept a reflective diary on the communicative interactions of the week to determine the type of information exchange and network of information flow. Further, if formal meetings or group activities were scheduled for the participants during the 4 - 6 week time span, the researchers attended and recorded that communicative interactivity.

At the close of the data collection period the following was collected:

Tape recorded interviews	n =34	60 - 90 minutes
Personal individual tapes	n =11	10 - 45 minutes
Personal diaries	n =20	10 - 30 A5 pages
Tape recorded meetings	n= 10	10-30 minutes

Findings: The tentative indicators

The indicators which resulted from the analysed transcriptions of the procedures noted above are set out below. Consistent with the theoretical and conceptual design of the study in relating the question of "resources" to the question of what is the nature of the interactive productivity between the local networks, the indicators are grouped under three main headings: Knowledge resources, Identity resources and Consolidated resources. These three different resource categories of meaning upon which people draw as they interact with each other are described as:

1 ***Knowledge resources*** - *where the interactions draw on the resource of shared (common) knowledge of community, personal, individual and collective information: Members' length of residence, genealogy, actions, values and reputations, occupations, volunteer positions, hobbies and interests.*

2 ***Identity resources*** - *where the interactions draw on the resource of shared (common) understandings of personal, individual and collective identities. This results in a sense of individuals 'belonging' in both social and civic categories.*

3 ***Consolidated resources*** - *where the interactions draw on the resource of shared (common) understanding and familiarity with community assets which are aggregated and used reciprocally for mutual benefit*

Now, the indicators are listed under each of these three major category headings (Column 1), with three further columns. The second column lists "Area of Interest", and is included to show the flavour and area of concern described by the indicators. The third column is the "Dimension" of the indicators, which themselves occupy the fourth and last column.

1 ***Knowledge resources*** *- where the interactions draw on the resource of shared knowledge of community, personal, individual and collective information.*

Category	Area of interest	Dimension	Indicator
Knowledge of who people are	• residents of the area • genealogy of the area • history of the area • the 'warts and all' • the heroes	Visibility of community • local newspaper coverage	• reporting local news and information
		• radio/TV	• reporting local news and information
		• outside newspaper	• reporting local news and information to wider locality
		• awards	• recognising and rewarding effort
		Published articles • books • history	• recording and exposing experience • recording and exposing, local history, genealogy, life stories
		• videos	• recording and exposing life stories
		• movie	• recording and exposing life stories
		Local Information • Service Directory	• recording and exposing availability of services and business
		• Information booth/signage	• exhibiting attractions • exposing contact persons • providing directions • recording services
		• Publicised meetings and contacts	• alerting of schedule • informing of contacts
Knowledge of what people do	Present and previous occupations	Extent and diversity	• recognising expertise • demonstrating experience
	Present and previous interests	Extent and diversity	• recognising someone's interest
Knowledge of what people are good at	Skills Knowledge Experience	Practical Qualities • skills, knowledge, experience • resources	• sharing skills and knowledge • passing on information • speaking of experience
		Business Qualities • finance • management • evaluation • facilitation • negotiation • organisation	• offering advice • giving help • thinking of solution • arranging contacts • demonstrating • making suggestions • offering support • bouncing off ideas
		Communication Qualities • oral • written • listening • compassion • empathy	
		Pragmatic Qualities • positiveness • good memory • enthusiasm • reliability • wisdom • commonsense • patience • diplomacy • accessibility • committed • support	
		Energising Qualities • making things happen • accepting challenge	

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2 ***Identity resources*** *- where the interactions draw on the resource of shared understandings of personal, individual and collective identities. This results in a sense of individuals 'belonging' in both social and civic categories.*

Category	Area of interest	Dimension	Indicator
Social identity	Sociability	Visiting	• opening house to visitors • visiting neighbour • visiting family • visiting the sick or housebound
		Social Outings	• organising outings
		Send cards of gifts	• exchanging gifts and cards
		Going down town	• meeting friends • meeting business contacts
		Telephone trees	• contacting friends • conducting business
	Integrity and trust	Say what you do - do what you say	• acting reliably
		Openness - 'blind eyes'	• choosing to ignore transgressions
		- past deeds	• choosing to ignore past deeds
	Reaching out to others	Lending a hand	• Attending funerals • Offering lifts • Paying bills • Lending money • Swapping duty rounds • Minding kids • Fixing car • Doing shopping • Moving house • Cooking gift • Welcoming newcomers • Responding to query
	Local Newspaper	Topic coverage	• covering interests including inside and outside news sport results current issues local awards introducing new folk difference of opinion spotlighting local heroes leisure activities (crossword, colour-ins & competitions)
		Advertising	• exercising local sponsorship
		Local Owner	• owning and operating newspaper by local
		Local Reporters	• reporting local news by local reporters
	Meeting in the street	Greeting strangers	• smiling • waving • assisting with directions • knowledge of local area and attractions
		Greeting locals	• smiling • waving • physical touching • having extended chats • exchanging news and messages • displaying genuine interest for personal concerns

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	Contributions are valued (by the community)	Rewards	• receiving life membership for service • receiving recognition awards for efforts
	Contributions are valued (by self)	Self efficacy	• increasing self esteem and worth • expressing pride of the community • giving back to the community
	Inclusiveness	Feeling part of the community	• inviting newcomers to participate quickly • listening to ideas from outside • discussing issues openly • seeking opinions of others • tolerating diversity
Civic identity	Good place to live	Pleasant surroundings	• pleasing to the eye geographically, close to major cities, lakes and mountains and beaches, isolated a little from nearest city so as not to be bothered
		Things to do	• undertaking recreational facilities • going to cultural events
		Use of local services	• meeting needs
	Community pride	Beautify landscape	• contributing to Tidy Towns • restoring riverside • beautifying street scape • restoring historical buildings
		Conservation	• embracing recycling • operating a conservational garbage tip • initiating Landcare projects

3 ***Consolidated resources*** *- where the interactions draw on the resource of shared understanding and familiarity with community assets which are aggregated and used reciprocally for mutual benefit*

Category	Area of interest	Dimension	Indicator
Consolidated social activities	Consolidated resources and infrastructure	Giant tapestry project Agricultural Show Craft Fair Food Fest Floods Fire Protest Public Forum Council Meeting	• Consolidating task-specific skills and knowledge • Sharing buildings and ground • Rallying to the cause from individuals and groups
	Large number of volunteers	Service clubs, groups and events	• giving time • providing service • fundraising • donating goods • donating through catering • donating administration
	Attendance by locals to local activity, stores and schools	Patronising local events Fairs Gala days Church Bazaar Footy finals Racing Days Local productions Local exhibits Displays	• attending local events
	Buffer activities by 'old boys'	Maintaining the peace	• mediating between rivals • quenching rumours as they arise • reconciling aggrieved parties • smoothing ruffled feathers
Consolidated civic activities	Community has its say	Public forums Protests council elections	• attending public meetings • electing councillors
	Community contributes to children and youth activities	Coaching sporting teams Blue light disco for youth Drama Festivals Music Groups	• initiating activities for youth
	Attendance by locals to local Stores and schools	Shops Schools	• shopping locally • attending local schools

Discussion, implications, further directions

By examining the categories of resources community members draw on as they interact over their individual and collective business, it has been possible to pose a set of indicators of those resources. It is the possible meanings of the interactive productivity (do these indicators reflect "social capital"?) which will now be discussed.

It needs to be stressed that the indicators listed above have undergone an extensive process of analysis and synthesis. As they stand, they represent the only empirically derived set of indicators of community interactive productivity developed through grounded theory found so far. However, there is still a long way to go. The first phase has been the derivation of the indicators using a grounded theory development approach. The next phase is

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to test those indicators. So the next step in the process is one where the indicators are conceptually and empirically tested in a variety of sites and with a number of cross-disciplinary academic, policy and practitioner experts.

Is the interactive productivity building social capital?

In so far as the interactions and resulting indicators utilise, create and reproduce the norms, networks and trust evident in the indicators, it can be claimed with a reasonable degree of confidence that the indicators describe what the literature encompasses in the term social capital. Research such as Onyx & Bullen (1997) makes a contribution of note to the research in the field, but it cannot be expected that a fairly traditional pseudo-scientific survey-research design can 'test' the existence of a commodity such as social capital by using meanings for it derived from non-empirical sources. Only, it is claimed here, grounded theory development can meet that challenge.

To comment on the results of this study compared with Putnam's (1993) two decade study of the features of social organisation in Italy which result in differential civic traditions will require much more analysis and space than is available in this paper. Of immediate interest is the different ways in which Putnam's and this research has been conceived. While not clear from his (1993) book, in coming to discuss the nature and definition of social capital, Putnam seems to argue for the coherence of trust, norms and networks as analytic or explanatory categories, and analyses his data on that basis. From the research perspective adopted by Putnam, it is possible to form a line of critique that in order to be able to make claims such as "Building social capital will not be easy, but it is the key to making democracy work" (ibid. p. 185), the data would need to allow an easy connection between the *existence* of social capital, detectable only through indicators of its resources being used, and the *mechanisms* (learning processes) which build it.

Further, interactive characteristics governing social behaviours such as trust, networks and norms, can be found in any society at any time. Putnam (1993) makes the claim that "...social capital may be even more important than physical or human capital" (p. 183) for political stability and government effectiveness. Fair enough. But where does this get us? For all the worth contained in the book, his analysis does not promote the ways in which stores of social capital might be constructed, nor help with its possible measurement.

The project reported on in this paper builds on Putnam's work in a small way. Our research conceptualises social capital at the outset from a synthesis of the available empirical and research commentary literature. To avoid the Onyx and Bullen problem of assuming meanings then finding them, the research opts for a unit of analysis of a whole community, and conceives that the production of social outcomes will be the result of the interactions between people, with the assumptions made explicit. So it holds the definitions at bay while it implements a process of analysing and building theory from the data up - grounded theory.

Already, the results of analysing two additional whole communities using the same techniques are starting to be available. These two communities vary in significant ways from the first "benchmarking" community from which the indicators in this paper are developed. This comprehensive programme of cross-checking, comparing and contrasting, and examining the possible causes of variations, should result soon in a capacity to interpret with some justification the possible nature of productivity resulting from interactions in a community. The additional data will be used to test the indicators already established, and to extend and synthesise as required.

Extensions of the present work

The same data and indicators can be used to extend the uses to which the research can be put. These extensions are presently conceived of having three main areas.

Developing measures of social capital

There is considerable debate and controversy over the possibility, desirability and practicability of measuring (at least attempting to measure) social capital. Yet without a measure of the store of social capital, its characteristics and potential remain unknown. Finding some measure of social capital is the first step in identifying gaps the stores, depleted key elements of the stores and areas of oversupply for planning and development purposes. Work emanating from the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, for example, Harrison (1998) is beginning to use the indicators reported in this paper and other project data to develop possible measures of a community's stores of social capital, and to identify gaps in it. There is a great deal of work yet to do in this area, but preliminary data from Harrison's ongoing work suggests that the communities studied using the indicators so far are identified as having depleted stores of volunteer resources.

Developing indicators for social capital: Indicators of a "learning community"

An historical and ongoing dilemma for the research at a conceptual and empirical level is the question of the difference between *process* and *outcome*. That is, in terms of definitions and terminology, how does the term "social capital" stand against the processes involved in *building* it. The project reported on here assumes that the interactive processes it has collected and analysed are the very processes which create, or build, stores of social capital. No other research or informed discussion has identified this distinction between process and outcome. However, the processes reflected by the indicators simultaneously stand as the only possible reflections of the resources in use. Presuming this distinction between process and outcome withstands the test of further analysis and research, the processes involved in the production of social capital are tentatively called learning processes. The processes consist of the interactions between people and groups of people which lead to a change of some kind to the perceived outcome of the collective activity. It is for this reason that we call the learning processes (interactive productivity) which result in outcomes (stores of social capital) for

a community of people, geographically grouped or otherwise, to be "community learning". A whole community which displays the characteristics of community learning is referred to as a "learning community".

The field of research and practice called community development partially recognises the process building social capital as "capacity building". That is, it recognises that a community needs to develop its collection of resources to a stage of "having sufficient capacity" to deal with day-to-day development as well as extraordinary developmental needs. For the time being, then, we are regarding the terms "capacity-building" and "community learning" as synonymous. Our preference is to urge in favour of the use of community learning, as this term puts an emphasis on the processes involved, naming them for what they are and facilitating an operationalisation of community development processes. The term "capacity" can only be measured or evaluated by reference to its "capacity-to-do..." certain things - and these things are now defined through the indicators in this paper.

Links between social capital and economic well-being

Is there a causal link between increased stores of social capital and economic well-being? Does such a link depend on the quality and the quantity of the stores? Is a sufficient store of the right kind of social capital enough to produce enhanced economic conditions? What else might be required?

The results of the research reported in this paper suggest that there are direct links between interactions of a particular kind and the products of that interaction. The links are ensured by the dual role of the indicators as reflections of the process of interactions which draw on stores of social capital, and as the reflections of the existence of the outcomes themselves (the stores of social capital). There is also sufficient warrant to suggest that the nature and quantity of the stores of resources - knowledge, identity and consolidated resources - *should* have an effect on the nature of the product. Assuming that "social capital" is a reasonable term to attach to the collection of knowledge, identity and consolidated resources identified here, then the stores of social capital so produced might well have a positive effect on the economic well-being of a community of people striving for a common purpose.

However, there is a chicken and egg problem here: Is it the quality and quantity of social activities (craft festivals, shows, meetings and so on) which create the interaction (which in turn produces positive interactive productivity), or is it the interaction which produces the opportunities for such events to arise and be created? Are there catalysts which work better in these cases? Can something be created out of (seemingly) nothing?

It is important that the clarifications, so tantalisingly close to resolution as they seem now, be resolved through further research, investigation and analysis.

Implications for further research

The first implication for further research stems from lingering doubts. The research on which the development of these indicators is based sought its sample of participants from recommendations of community members based on who they turn to for help, advice or information. Does this mean that the sample may have favoured 'friendly' people, people who have a propensity of interactions in any case? Not necessarily, but there is cause for doubt. The doubt raises the question: What about the 'loner'? Do people who prefer to be alone, to work independently and to interact with few people contribute in the same or different ways to those suggested in the reported indicators to whole-community outcomes?

Related, but in need of independently extended research is the question: Has technology, through computers, email and the Web made the line between personal and electronic interactions more or less important to the development of social capital?

As the present indicators stand, there is the possibility of misinterpreting the results of the research as implying that all communities should have full stocks of social capital at all times. This is not an intended implication of the research. It is recognised that communities will have different purposes requiring the use of social capital stores at different times. Most importantly, these purposes will vary in magnitude and the sub-groups which need to be involved in responding to the particular purpose. The present whole community case study has been supplemented by the study of two additional communities each with varying characteristics from the "benchmark" community. It will be recalled that the research question for the study is: *What is the nature of the interactive productivity between the local networks in a community?* From the benchmark community and the two comparators, it will soon be possible to make some assertions about the variable requirements of social capital and the interactivity between the networks which help produce it. In other words, there may soon be some answers to the questions: What is the nature and level of activity between the networks (formal and informal), and what kinds of activities and purposes does this support?

Finally, if as Putnam says, "Building social capital will not be easy, but it is the key to making democracy work" (1993, p. 185), there is some urgency both to consummate the refinement, testing, supplementation and adjustment of the indicators reported herein, as well as to hasten the extension of the indicators to possible measures, other contexts, otherly conceived 'communities' of practice (for example, electronic communities, corporations, enterprises, government departments, professional associations), and in the extension of the indicators resulting in benign measures of social capital which will in turn inform developed and trialed "best practice guidelines" for building social capital.

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